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THE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN CHILD CARE

ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

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Ontario Public School Boards' Association

CONTENTS

BACKGROUND 1

UNRESOLVED ISSUES 2

- Introduction 2
- Inequity of Service 2
- Child Care Policies 4
- Licencing 4
- Funding 5
- Design and Planning 7
- School Board Coordination 8

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN ESTABLISHING CHILD CARE CENTRES IN NEW SCHOOLS 9

- Community Needs Assessment 9
- Operator Selection 10
- Criteria for Facilities 10
- Maintenance 11
- Enrolment Principles/Access 11
- Transportation 13
- Full Year Care 13
- Special Needs Children 14
- Programming and Quality 14
- Staffing and Qualifications 15
- Liaison 16
- Public Perception and Legal Liability 17
- Liability 18

CONCLUSION 22

RECOMMENDATIONS 23

BACKGROUND REPORT OF THE ALSBO TASK FORCE 21

- New Initiatives 22
- Federal Initiatives 23
- Provincial Initiatives 23
- Task Force Initiatives 25
- Joint Ministry Initiatives 28
- Child Care in Schools - Questions & Answers 29
- Advisory Committee on Child Care Issues 30

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BACKGROUND

Child care has become a major social issue across Canada and especially in Ontario where the need and desire to provide accessible, high quality and affordable care has become crucial. Many school boards, recognizing a variety of community needs for child care, have chosen to become involved in the child care system, most often through the provision of school space to house community-based child care centres. In fact, approximately 600 centres are currently housed in schools, and that number is growing due to new initiatives by the provincial government.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association recognizes the leadership role played by school boards in this area and is sensitive to the new initiatives of the provincial government to expand the school-aged child care system. However, a number of new mandates - including that of the Ministry of Education to provide capital funding for building child care centres in all new schools - and proposals to legislate various aspects of school boards' role have created confusion and raised additional issues for boards.

The major goal of this paper is to review the current role of the school board in child care and to provide the government, through both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, with the position of the trustees' association on public school boards' changing and expanding role. It is a synthesis of discussions and positions originally developed by three individual organizations - The Association of Large School Boards In Ontario (ALSBO), the Northern Ontario School Trustees' Association (NOSTA), and the Ontario Public School Trustees' Association (OPSTA) - which have recently amalgamated to create the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. It is presented to help direct the development of government policy in this area. Appended to the paper

for background information is an overview of the new initiatives undertaken by the provincial and federal governments, as well as a summary of the results of ALSBO's two years of investigation into the school-based child care system.

UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Introduction

The role that school boards play, and will continue to play, in the provision of child care services in Ontario has finally been recognized, at least in part, by the provincial government. This long-awaited recognition, however, has brought with it a new set of problems, concerns, and questions. School boards themselves must decide how involved they wish to be in this complex and highly volatile social issue and continue to clarify and define their role for the benefit of the children requiring care, without losing sight of their major responsibility to provide quality educational services to school-aged children and other learners in the local community.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association believes that the role of the educational system in the provision of child care services should be a matter of local board autonomy, not legislated by the government. Current proposals to amend the Education Act and regulations, if approved, would remove many options in the provision of child care services from the control of the local board. These proposed changes are discussed in detail in OPSBA's response to the latest Omnibus Bill (1988) and in OPSBA's response to the Ministry's new draft policy statement on child care. This position paper sets out the public school boards' positions on a variety of issues relating to child care and schools, which continue to remain unresolved.

Inequity of Service

Inequality in the availability of service continues to exist even with the development of new commitments, initiatives and partnerships. One major issue -the provision of capital funds to construct child care centres in new schools -highlights one of these service inequities.

Only growing boards currently building new schools are involved in the capital funding program. This mandatory program does not recognize local board autonomy in the decision to provide space for child care centres, and in fact, penalizes non-growth boards since no capital funds for any type of

construction or space renovation are available to them. As well, boards with vacant space, and those without space, are not required to become involved in child care although they may want to establish centres or programs. Equally frustrating is the fact that some growth boards and boards experiencing population shifts cannot rationalize the building of permanent centres when school-aged children, the priority group targetted by the Ministries, will be housed in portable classrooms during the school day.

Another issue centres around the provision of Junior Kindergarten. Boards not offering this optional program question building child care centres to serve the same age group of children. In many growth areas, classroom space (both permanent and portable) does not exist for JK programs. Additionally, conflicting definitions of pre-school, nursery, and school-aged children between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services add to the confusion and frustration for school boards and for parents.

This piecemeal program which mandates one board's involvement - or conversely, can prevent another board's involvement - in child care does not respect or consider the needs of families and children. It arbitrarily assumes a need in growth areas while negating needs in jurisdictions where populations are stable or in decline. In these cases, the will of the local school board or pressure from the community are the only routes to the provision of school-based child care services.

The current underfunding of the entire Ministry of Education capital budget is also a concern. The provision of funds to build "bricks and mortar" child care centres in new schools while children in regular classes are housed in portables on the same site or within the same jurisdiction, and the totally inadequate funding for much-needed school renovations and repairs right across the province are creating inequities from board to board and within the same jurisdiction. One potential solution to the overall lack of child care facilities in the province would be the development of a high quality portable or re-locatable facility suitable for housing a child care program. School boards are familiar with portable facilities and could play a useful role in assisting and advising on the development of a "child care portable". Funding for this initiative should come from the Ministry of Community and Services, as the "lead" ministry in the provision of child care. This type of facility could be transported to a site in conjunction with a school, where appropriate, or to other areas where a need exists and then moved to another location if the need for child care in that local community changes. While "portables" are not the ultimate answer to space concerns, they would be valuable in increasing the

number of child care spaces available and in supplying child care facilities to those areas of greatest need.

RECOMMENDATION #1

> **That the Ministry of Community and Social Services, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, provide funds to support the development of suitable high quality portable or re-locatable facilities to house child care centres in accordance with the requirements of the Day Nurseries Act and the Education Act.**

Child Care Policies

Now that school boards have been recognized as one of the partners in the provision of child care services, it becomes vitally important that individual boards involved in child care develop policies to deal with their responsibilities. Boards in a position to build new schools would be wise to establish policy quickly, and others, including those with vacant space that could be used, should also engage in policy development. These policies should be flexible to adapt to growth and change which is inevitable when any new initiative is implemented. But boards must proceed cautiously and seek legal and financial advice to limit their liability. It is to be expected, as well, that as the Ministry of Education develops its own policy, additional emphasis will be placed on the school boards' role. However, the decision to develop policy should rest with the local school boards; it should not be mandated by the government through legislation.

RECOMMENDATION # 2

> **That public school boards in Ontario involved in child care develop flexible policies to deal with school-based non profit child care centres; child care for school-aged children (3.8-12 years), as well as the children of school-aged parents, adult students, and board staff, and for the role of the individual board in the provision of these services.**

Licensing

The fact that school boards cannot, by law, hold a licence to operate a non-profit child care centre remains an issue. OPSBA believes that the Day Nurseries Act and the Education Act should be

revised to permit boards to obtain licences for school-age child care programs. Any amendments, however, should not "mandate" boards to hold licences but, instead, should be permissive in nature.

This could enhance the growth of child care in jurisdictions where a non-profit corporation with a parent board of directors cannot be established to meet an immediate community need. It would also provide boards with access to funding for renovations and equipment, for start-up and operating capital to set up a center and to ensure its ongoing operation. The wide variety of school board expertise in business management would be available to these child care centres, providing a measure of stability that is often lacking in non-profit corporations. The child care program would also benefit from the services of the academic staff of the board, ensuring the necessary links between the child care centre and school programs.

While licensing could solve problems and provide answers to questions on the role of the school board, it must be noted that many boards do not want to hold licences and operate child care programs directly. A major concern for both boards and local communities is the use of education tax dollars for child care. However, permissive legislation will not impose on this group while supporting boards which can benefit from holding a licence. Licensing may mean additional costs for boards, and consideration must be given to the concept of cost-recovery programs. The decision to apply for a licence must be left to the local school board, and not be made mandatory.

RECOMMENDATION #3

> **That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services amend the Education Act and the Day Nurseries Act to allow school boards the option of applying for and holding licences to establish school-aged child care centres.**

Funding

School-aged children have been identified by the government as the priority for school boards when utilizing school space for child care purposes. This has been supported by the Ministry of Education's capital program which provides funds and requires school boards to construct child care centres in all new schools. Capital funding is also available from the Ministry of Community and Social Services for the renovation of existing vacant school space. However, this money is available only to non-profit licenced corporations and not to boards themselves. Start-up, furniture, equip-

ment, and operational grants similarly are offered to these non-profit community corporations. Additional funding for pilot projects and other programs to support the system can be obtained directly by the child care community but not by school boards.

If the program to provide capital funding for the construction of child care centres in new schools is to be ongoing it should be expanded to include "replacement" schools which, in some cases, have not been eligible. As well, capital funds to renovate existing available space and to build additions on schools to house child care centres should be included in this Ministry of Education capital program. In the case of new school construction, this funding must include the costs involved in purchasing of a school site of an appropriate size to include the additional space needed for playgrounds, parking lots and other services required to meet government standards for child care centres. School boards should also be entitled to recoup the operating and administrative costs they will bear when a child care centre is located in a school building. At the present time, these costs are not included in the existing capital funding plan and are being paid by individual school boards and local taxpayers. Capital funding shortfalls that currently exist must also be considered in this program.

A recent development has surfaced in some municipalities regarding zoning for child care centres. In some cases, a school may be located in a zone where child care centres are not permitted. This may pose less of a problem if the centre is used exclusively for school-aged children. However, centres that admit pre-school-aged children may contravene local zoning by-laws. School boards would be well advised to investigate local zoning in the original planning process. As well, the Ministry of Education should not make the assumption that a child care centre can easily or legally be included in a school building.

RECOMMENDATION #4

That the Ministry of Education continue to provide capital grants to school boards to fund the construction of child care centres in new schools and replacement schools, to provide funds for renovations to available space and additions to existing schools, based on the total cost of the project including that portion of the school site which will be used by the child care centre, and to provide funds for the administrative and operating costs that will be borne by the school board.

School boards should also be permitted to access start-up and operational grants directly through the Ministry of Community and Social Services programs to establish non-profit, licensed child care centres in vacant school space if the need exists in a school community. This could accelerate the establishment of child care centres and prevent delays in opening these facilities which could occur if a non-profit corporation cannot be formed or if complications in the incorporation procedure arise.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services' system of obtaining approvals for capital funding and the release of these funds for the renovation of existing school space should be accelerated to respond to current and growing community needs for additional child care spaces. The length of time involved in the application and approval process impedes the establishment of child care centres. Funding for pilot projects which meet the criteria outlined in the document, Child Care: Program Development Fund, should also be available to school boards wishing to establish their own child care programs or programs on behalf of a community which has decided to set up a non-profit licensed centre.

RECOMMENDATION #5

> **That the Ministry of Community and Social Services permit school boards direct access to capital funds available for the renovation of vacant school space, start-up, operating, furniture and equipment grants; and provide funding for pilot projects to establish school-aged child care centres where community needs exist.**

Design and Planning

Space and design requirements for child care centres outlined in the Day Nurseries Act differ from the requirements in the Education Act for the same age group of children. These two Acts must be reviewed immediately and revised to bring them in line. The two Ministries involved must work together to achieve this necessary rationalization.

Due to the differences that currently exist, a child care centre constructed in a school and in accordance with the Regulations of the Day Nurseries Act cannot be used by school-aged children during the school day. This prevents any space sharing and other arrangements which could benefit the school-aged child and the school itself. Similarly, a junior kindergarten or kindergarten classroom can not be used for child care.

The difference between space allocated for elementary and secondary school child care centres (2,350 and 4,500 square feet respectively) must also be reviewed. The assumption that secondary schools will draw from a wider geographic area and will require larger centres is not entirely valid. Parents of school-aged children will obviously prefer to use the centre in the local elementary school the child attends. Secondary school centres should make the children of teenage students and adults a priority. Most of these children will likely be infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers, not school-aged children. The arbitrary space allocations seem inappropriate.

RECOMMENDATION #6

> **That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services work jointly to rationalize the space and facility requirements in the Education Act and the Day Nurseries Act and Regulations for school-aged child care centres and to re-evaluate the space allocation differences between centres in elementary and secondary schools.**

School Board Coordination

School boards have expressed the need for a high level of coordination in the provision of child care services. And some boards have hired staff specifically trained in early childhood education to administer programs. School board child care coordinators, where they exist, provide valuable links between community groups, child care centre boards of directors, operators and staff in these centres, and school board staff, including school principals and teachers, program coordinators, plant and facilities departments, supervisory officers, provincial ministry staff and others.

Many boards are reticent to hire these people and use education tax dollars to support child care, which is not the first responsibility of the school system. Boards who have taken the step to provide in-house coordination however, find it invaluable, and it also permits them to facilitate a wide range of programs to meet the needs of the local community.

To assist boards in developing and maintaining close links with the local community's child care needs and preferences, consideration should also be given to the establishment of local school board Child Care Advisory Committees. These groups would be able to make recommendations to the boards regarding the establishment and development of school-based child care services. Membership could include representatives from local child care associations and advocacy groups, board

personnel involved in child care, child care operators, early childhood educators, parents, and trustees. As school boards become more involved in child care, such advisory committees will prove to be useful sounding boards, watchdogs, and conveyors of information on the local community's expectations, while ensuring that the needs of the children involved are met.

RECOMMENDATION #7

> **That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services provide ongoing funding to school boards engaged in providing school-aged child care to hire ECE trained coordinators or consultants to supervise the boards' child care activities, and to establish at the local level board-based Child Care Advisory Committees which would make recommendations to the board on matters affecting the establishment and development of child care services.**

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN ESTABLISHING CHILD CARE CENTRES IN NEW SCHOOLS

While the Ministries have attempted to clarify many of the questions and concerns raised by boards regarding the establishment of child care in schools, a large number of the unresolved issues that affect the organization and operation of these centres remain unanswered. Boards are finding themselves in the position where they must make decisions without the benefit of concrete information.

In areas where new schools are being built, boards have no choice; they must include a child care centre in new elementary and secondary schools. On the other hand, boards with vacant school space not required for education purposes have the option of making this space available to an interested community group which has organized itself as a non-profit incorporated body. This inequity must be recognized and remedied.

Community Needs Assessment

Responsibility for determining the need for a school-based child care centre constructed in a new school remains unclarified. It appears that the Ministry of Community and Social Services is respon-

sible for determining this need, but boards building new schools are unaware that any such community assessments are being done. However, Ministry staff report that a board wishing to be exempt from including a child care centre in a new school must prove that a need for child care does not exist in that school community. Responsibility for establishing need, as well as for obtaining an exemption, is not defined.

The stated priority for school-based child care is school-aged children, No recourse appears available to a board if they determine the community need to be spaces for pre-school children or infants, the children of adult students, teenaged parents, or board staff.

Operator Selection

Boards are also being encouraged to become involved in the process of selecting the operators for a school-based child care program. OPSBA assumes that boards and schools will be assisted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in determining appropriate operators by developing criteria to guide them in the process. Some of the aspects that might be considered are itemized in the Questions and Answers brochures, but boards have basically been left on their own in this area. Boards who are involved in child care will want to develop flexible policies and establish clearly in which areas they will have specific or joint jurisdiction with the child care centre operator. Boards should consider their role carefully when selecting an operator to permit and foster good relations between schools, the board, and the child care centre.

Criteria for Facilities

According to the Ministry of Education, the board's relationship with the child care centre and the operator of the program remains as that of a landlord only. In the case of new school construction, it is expected that planning and design will be a cooperative effort between the board and its architect, the child care corporation and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. But who has the final say on the size of the centre, the location within the school building, and other factors? And what criteria are to be used to determine these features when two conflicting pieces of legislation set out different facility requirements for the same age group? If the Day Nurseries Act is in force, does that negate any possibility of the school sharing the child care centre space? The same questions arise when existing school space is renovated for child care use. A long needed government review of the conflicting standards in the Education Act and the Day Nurseries Act is apparently underway by the Ministries.

Maintenance

As a landlord, the board must decide if it is willing to assume responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the child care premises and undertake repairs and renovations as needed. If it should decide not to do so, the operator will be responsible for purchasing these services elsewhere. Health and safety considerations, collective agreements with school board staff, and standards of maintenance could be compromised if a board did not assume the responsibility or maintain some role in this. However, the issue of the cost of these services and who pays for them remains.

If the responsibility is assumed by the board, it must seek ways to recover the costs involved. These could be substantial and beyond the reach of the child care centre budget without increasing fees to the parents. If boards give child care centres reduced rates on these services, educational dollars will definitely be used to support the child care centre, an idea that is not always supported by either school boards or local ratepayers. This area requires a full review and investigation and the provision of additional funding to school boards to help solve these problems. OPSBA supports the concept of cost-recovery where possible since operational funding is not provided by the Ministry of Education to cover any of these costs.

Enrolment Principles/Access

The Ministry of Community and Social Services views non-profit child care as a service open to all children in the community without restriction. This concept is supported by the Ministry of Education which has stated that school boards do not have the right to restrict enrolment or access to non-profit school-based, school-aged child care centres to those children whose parents are ratepayers of the school board housing the facility.

Although some boards may wish to establish such strict enrolment criteria, OPSBA cannot support this. Boards are not permitted to hold child care licences and receive no direct funding from either Ministry for the operation of school-based centres. Until the funding and licensing system is changed to permit boards to actually operate child care centres, access should not be restricted on the basis of tax support.

Boards must consider, however, working with the child care centre operator to develop guidelines for access and enrolment. Since the Ministry of Education has established school-aged child care as a priority for the education system, it is reasonable that children requiring care who are currently en-

rolled in the school where the child care centre is located, be given the first opportunity to access. Boards should also take into consideration the children of student parents or adults who have returned to school, specifically in the case of secondary school-based child care. These criteria, which should be negotiated with the child care centre operator will, of course, be based on the number of age-appropriate spaces (infant, toddler, pre-school, school-aged) available in the centre itself.

Restricting access can also create problems for child care centres. It is more cost-effective to operate a centre at full capacity, which eliminates the possibility of a deficit for the child care centre. If access is based on ratepayer support, centres could find themselves in a position where they lack sufficient children to maintain full operation with a complete staff and could be forced to close due to operating deficits. This would not be in the best interests of the children and families who require quality child care.

Boards must also ensure that non-profit school-based centres provide access for the subsidized child, where such subsidies are available. This will enable many school-aged parents, who require subsidized child care to use the school-based system.

RECOMMENDATION #8

> **That access to non-profit, school-based child care centres be open to all children of the school community, regardless of school board tax support (public or separate), with priority given to school-aged children attending the school, the children of secondary school and adult students of the board according to the number of age-appropriate spaces available in the school-based child care centre.**

Additional access concerns have surfaced recently due to the freeze on provincial subsidy dollars imposed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. A large number of student parents - specifically teen-aged mothers - are unable to continue their secondary school studies because they cannot place their children in care without being subsidized. Building additional child care centres in both elementary and secondary schools will not alleviate this problem if subsidized spaces are unavailable. This creates a dilemma for school boards. The teen-aged parent who wants, and should be encouraged, to attend school is unable to do so even if space is available in a child care centre, and the school board has no authority to pay the cost of care to ensure that the parent can continue

to attend school. The Ministry of Community and Social Services must immediately reassess its program and provide additional funding for subsidies to remedy this.

Transportation

At the present time, the Ministry of Education does not provide funding through the GLGs to transport children between child care centres and schools.

This has created, and will continue to create, difficulties for boards and for many working parents who do not have in-home child care arrangements. With the establishment of school-aged, school-based child care centres, transportation concerns will escalate and some children will be restricted from receiving child care because transportation will not be available to them.

If the Ministry of Education wishes to continue to encourage the development of the school-aged, school-based child care system, these funding arrangements must be changed to permit payment of grants for transporting children between child care centres and schools.

RECOMMENDATION #9

> **That the Ministry of Education revise its funding mechanism to permit school boards to receive funds to transport school-aged children between child care centres, schools and their homes.**

Full Year Care

It is the expectation of both ministries that school-based child care centre will operate year round should the need for full year care exist. If school-based child care centres will be open when school is not in session (PD days, school vacations, etc.) boards must ensure that the costs incurred by the continual operation of the physical plant be recovered. This should be clearly established in the leasing arrangement between the school board and the child care centre operator.

Also to be considered is the need for liaison between the school and the child care centre when school personnel is not on site. Boards should designate someone to assume the liaison role in these cases. The potential legal and liability implications for boards must be investigated carefully. as boards are likely to be perceived to be the operators of the school-based child care centre.

Boards are advised to seek legal advice in this area and ensure that their liability insurer is aware of the situation. The development of policy in this area should be addressed by the school boards.

Special Needs Children

An additional access issue concerns the special needs child. Many of these children are enrolled in schools and would utilize school-based child care if it was available. However, due to the Day Nurseries Act, child care is often not available to these children and to their families, a group that would benefit greatly from these child care services.

The Day Nurseries Act does not establish any criteria for the care of these children and many operators are unwilling and/or unable to develop the specialized programs, hire the appropriate staff and purchase the necessary equipment required to support special needs children. While the educational system has a mandate to service these children and has extensive experience in doing so, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has not developed programs or strategies in this area. The Day Nurseries Act is silent on special needs child care.

RECOMMENDATION #10

> **That the Ministry of Community and Social Services work with the Ministry of Education to develop strategies to serve the school-aged special needs child in child care.**

Programming and Quality

Also to be considered are numerous questions dealing with the quality of the child care program and its interaction with the school program. What role can the board play in ensuring that this exists when the government has made it clear that the school board is not responsible for the program in the child care centre? If the children in care attend school in the same building, viable links, cooperation and coordination will be needed to prevent unnecessary duplication in activities and to provide support for both programs' components and goals. School boards will have a vested interest in this since public perception of responsibility for quality programming could accrue to the board when the child care centre is located in the school building. A strong case can be made for board support and involvement in the child care program considering the expertise of professional teaching staff in child development and learning styles. However, the differences in training and approaches between

certified teachers and early childhood educators in child care centres and jurisdictional questions could create conflicts that would not serve the best interests of the children involved. School boards must carefully consider the selection of operators to ensure that high quality programs that interact effectively with the school program will be offered.

It will also be necessary to consider program offerings for special needs children who require child care. The province must address this issue and be prepared to provide the additional funding to serve these children, both for resources and in the qualifications and numbers of staff employed in school-based child care centres.

Boards also are not permitted to play any role in the evaluation of the program in a school-based child care centre. Annual reviews of the program are required but not always conducted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. No authority exists for the school board to become involved in this vital aspect even though the responsibility is not necessarily being assumed by the social services ministry. This limits, to an even greater extent, the possibility of developing links between the two programs provided for the same children. It also raises the question of public perceptions - child care centres in schools will often be considered a school program by parents and community members.

When a school board is finalizing a contract with a child care centre operator, it should consider developing policy and procedures that permit the board to assess both the viability of the centre and the quality of its program. An annual assessment of this nature will help develop the necessary school-child care centre links and encourage quality programming based on the children's needs.

RECOMMENDATION #11

> **That school boards involved in the provision of school-aged child care services develop with the operators of school-based child care centres an annual review process and procedures to evaluate the ongoing viability of the child care centre, and the program being offered for school-aged children.**

Staffing and Qualifications

Going hand in hand with concerns regarding program are those that exist over staffing and the qualifications of staff. In the child care centre, workers (other than the supervisor) are not required

under the conditions of the Day Nurseries Act, to hold a diploma or degree in early childhood education. As well, those that do hold ECE degrees are qualified to work with pre-school children, but may be at a loss to meet the needs of school-aged children, specifically those who are in the intermediate grades. In fact, many ECE programs do not prepare students for working with this age group which will be a priority in many of the school-based centres as a result of the government's thrust for care for the school-aged child.

Remediating this problem will require a cooperative effort between the Community College and Faculty of Education deans to coordinate programs to ensure that ECE staff receive the proper training to deal with the older school-aged child. It would also be useful to encourage the universities to initiate degree programs in ECE, as currently offered only through Ryerson. Another consideration would be the ability to transfer Community College credits to degree programs. A joint committee, composed of representatives from a wide variety of stakeholders in the child care system, could investigate these potential options and their effect on the school-age child care system.

RECOMMENDATION #12

That a joint committee composed of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities, and Community and Social Services, the various professional associations of early childhood educators, the teachers' federations, deans of the Faculties of Education and Community College ECE programs, school board administrators, school trustees, and child care operators be formed to investigate the differences in training and qualifications that exist between early childhood educators and qualified teachers who are dealing with the school-aged child.

Liaison

Along with programming and staffing concerns come questions of ongoing liaison between the child care centre and the school. Daily on-site coordination will be paramount in making any partnership between the two entities effective. The role of the school's administrator - the principal - will need careful definition. The Ministry of Education is discussing the introduction of legislation to "protect" principals who will not be involved in the program of the child care centre but are responsible for the school building and the welfare of students (Section 236 of the Education Act and Regulation 262). By legislating or regulating this liaison role, the principal is given operational responsibility but no

authority over the program of the centre. This will raise questions about the principal's and the school board's liability. While school-based liaison is necessary, a legislated definition of the principal's role should not be considered. This should be a matter for local school board decision and local policy development.

The form that this liaison role will take must be reviewed carefully by the school board. Will the principal or designate act as the board's on-site agent and, if so, to what extent? Should the principal be a member of the child care centre's board of directors? What other school staff should be involved and in what ways? This is vitally important if the question of legal liability arises due to an unforeseen accident or crisis situation. With or without legislation to determine school staff roles, trustees and administrators must identify potential problem areas before making any policy and procedure decisions.

Child care centre operators in schools will also play a role in determining the degree of coordination between the school and centre. For example, will an operator allow a board, or the board's on-site representatives, to become involved in matters such as child care centre programming, staffing, operating hours or sharing of facilities, or will this lead to confrontation between the operator and the school? All of these matters should be considered by the individual board and any policy should be generated at the local, not the provincial, level.

Public Perception and Legal Liability

Public feeling that school boards are involved and should become increasingly involved in the provision of affordable, quality child care for children of all ages is rapidly growing in Ontario. And with this belief comes the perception, real or imagined, that where child care centres are located in schools, those centres are governed by and are the responsibility of the school board. Ontario's emerging school-based child care system does not recognize this fact and, further, does not permit school boards to operate the centres or control the program directly.

Allowing school boards to hold licences would place control and responsibility in the hands of the boards. Parents would have direct recourse to the board regarding staff, program, facilities, hours of operation, enrolment criteria, etc. And legal liability would rest with the board, as well. The role of the school principal, specifically as a liaison person, and in cases where the principal is a member of the child care centre's board of directors (a reality in many present situations) must also be considered. At the present time, the issue of liability is uncertain and boards must do everything possible

to protect against potential legal problems that could arise in light of a serious occurrence at the school-based centre. This can be done, but only in part, by developing clear policy, guidelines, and procedures locally.

Liability

Boards should also ensure that their school-based child care centres obtain sufficient liability insurance as required by the Day Nurseries Act. Boards could consider specifying the amount of insurance coverage required (no less that $2 million) in the leasing arrangement with the child care centre operator.

Boards must also urge the government to make policy development a provincial priority. Information and assistance, rather than legislation, should be provided to boards to facilitate local decisions. The onus is on school boards to provide the government with input to encourage clarification and the immediate development of unrestrictive policy which will consider local autonomy.

CONCLUSION

The role of school boards in child care is still uncertain. Although many boards have already made the decision to be partners in the provision of services, others are now being forced into a role they may not wish to play. Far too many questions remain unanswered and it does not appear that they will be answered in the near future. The Ministry of Education's Child Care Advisory Committee, which first met in May 1988, has a difficult task ahead of it in developing appropriate and flexible policy dealing with the school boards' role and responsibilities. OPSBA firmly believes that school boards must be involved in any and all consultations and decisions that are made in this area to ensure that the needs of the child - both the child in care and the child in school - are adequately and appropriately met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Ministry of Community and Social Services, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, provide funds to support the development of suitable high quality portable or re-locatable facilities to house child care centres in accordance with the requirements of the Day Nurseries Act and the Education Act.

2. That public school boards in Ontario involved in child care develop flexible policies to deal with: school-based non profit child care centres; child care for school-aged children (3.8-12 years), as well as the children of school-aged parents, adult students, and board staff; and for the role of the individual board in the provision of these services.

3. That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services amend the Education Act and the Day Nurseries Act to allow school boards the option of applying for and holding licenses to establish school-aged child care centres.

4. That the Ministry of Education continue to provide capital grants to school boards to fund the construction of child care centres in new schools and replacement schools and to provide funds for renovations to available space and additions to existing schools, based on the total cost of the project, including that portion of the school site which will be used by the child care centre and the administrative and operating costs that will be borne by the school board.

5. That the Ministry of Community and Social Services permit school boards direct access to capital funds available for the renovation of vacant school space, start-up, operating, furniture and equipment grants, and funding for pilot projects to establish school-aged child care centres where community needs exist.

6. That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services work jointly to rationalize the space and facilities requirements in the Education Act and the Day Nurseries Act and Regulations for school-aged child care centres and to re-evaluate the space allocation differences between centres in elementary and secondary schools.

7. That the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services provide ongoing funding to school boards engaged in providing school-aged child care to fund the hiring of

ECE trained coordinators or consultants to supervise the board's child care activities, and to establish, at the local level, board-based Child Care Advisory Committees which would make recommendations to the board on matters affecting the establishment and development of child care services.

8. That access to non-profit, school-based child care centres be open to all children of the school community, regardless of school board tax support (public or separate), with priority given to school-aged children attending the school, the children of secondary school and adult students of the board according to the number of age-appropriate spaces available in the school-based child care centre.

9. That the Ministry of Education revise its funding mechanism to permit school boards to receive funds to transport school-aged children between child care centres, schools and their homes.

10. That the Ministry of Community and Social Services work with the Ministry of Education to develop strategies to serve the school-aged special needs child in child care.

11. That school boards involved in the provision of school-aged child care services develop with the operators of school-based child care centres an annual review process and procedures to evaluate the ongoing viability of the child care centre and the program being offered for school-age children.

12. That a joint committee composed of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Colleges and Universities, and Community and Social Services, the various professional associations of early childhood educators, the teachers' federations, deans of the Faculties of Education and Community College ECE programs, school board administrators, school trustees, and child care operators be formed to investigate the differences in training and qualifications that exist between early childhood educators and qualified teachers who are dealing with the school-aged child.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS IN CHILD CARE

BACKGROUND REPORT OF THE ALSBO TASK FORCE 1986-88

Two years have passed since the Association of Large School Boards in Ontario established the Task Force on Child Care to develop a position on the role of school boards in this critical and important social area.

From the beginning it was apparent that member boards held differing opinions regarding the central issue - the desire of some boards to hold licences and operate programs under the Day Nurseries Act - which led to the formation of the Task Force. The fact that school boards were facilitating child care services designed to meet community needs was not in question. More than 500 programs were operating in Ontario school facilities under a variety of local arrangements at that time, and this number has now grown to approximately 600. These programs include everything from infant care to before- and after-school activities. Another factor noted was the ever-increasing need for quality, affordable child care services, and growing public perceptions and expectations that schools are and should be active participants in the child care system.

Also existing at that time was a tremendous amount of confusion over the responsibility for child care since the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), not the Ministry of Education (MOE), serves as the "lead" ministry in this area. Adding further to the quandary, then and now, is the funding partnership between the federal and provincial governments and the additional responsibility for some child care initiatives by other provincial ministries, including Culture and Recreation, as well as local municipalities. These inter-related responsibilities suggested the need for coordination among all levels of government.

A further concern that had to be addressed was the legitimacy of using school space for child care programs. The Ministry of Education stated in a letter to ALSBO (February 18, 1987) that it could not recognize "day care services as a legitimate use of pupil space when the space is needed for school-aged children". This position seemed to place existing and potential programs in jeopardy, and clarification was sought. While the Ministry responded that existing programs were not in danger, the basic philosophy which places school-aged children's needs first and foremost was maintained.

As a starting point in its discussions, the Task Force determined that its role would be:

1) to develop a 'flexible' position representing the differing opinions held by the ALSBO Member Boards

2) to collect and share data on current school board policies and programs

3) to inform the education community about child care issues, and

4) to investigate the concerns of boards regarding their role in the provision of services.

The Task Force identified a multitude of valid reasons to support school-based child care programs. The many benefits for the child, the community, and the school system were itemized in the Preliminary Report of the Task Force. An equal number of specific concerns were also listed. The interrelationship of the benefits and concerns created confusion for school boards and tended to discourage some from becoming involved in child care.

The Preliminary Report of the Task Force on Child Care included four recommendations addressed by ALSBO at its Annual General Meeting in May, 1987. These recommendations called for:

1) a province-wide survey of programs, positions, policies and practices of school boards to be used as an information base

2) the development of a provincial conference to examine the role of school boards in the provision of child care services, and

3) developing strategies to lobby the Ministry of Education to recognize child care as a legitimate use of school space.

It also recommended the continuation of the Task Force to collect additional data and develop a position on the role of school boards. The ALSBO Membership endorsed these recommendations.

NEW INITIATIVES

The Task Force operated under the belief that Child Care is not simply "a women's issue", but rather "a children's issue" which affects society in general. The needs of the child and the provision of services to encourage appropriate child development are the keys to quality child care services. Recent government initiatives and a renewed commitment to child care services by both the federal and

provincial governments support this philosophy. These new initiatives will affect school boards and are reviewed as background information.

Federal Initiatives

In March of 1987, the federal government's House of Commons Special Committee on Child Care recognized the role of school boards in the provision of child care services, and stressed the need for more child care spaces for school-aged children. It also encouraged the provincial governments and their education ministries and departments to provide space and equipment for school-age child care in cooperation with parents and volunteer agencies. Also noted were the needs of adolescent parents to complete their education and have access to quality care for their children.

The long-awaited National Strategy on Child Care finally appeared late in 1987. This response to the Commons Special Committee announced new cost-sharing arrangements between the federal and provincial governments. The resulting Federal Child Care legislation was designed to provide approximately $4 billion to the provinces to create an estimated 200,000 new spaces nation-wide and a further $2.3 billion to be dispersed in tax credits to parents to finance the purchase of child care.

Child care advocates were not pleased with the proposed legislation and questioned the method of delivery and the adequacy of the proposed funds. The legislation was also criticized because it did not set minimum national standards for child care.

The Bill received final approval in the House of Commons in September, 1988 and was sent to the Senate. While the Senate initiated hearings on the legislation, they were cancelled when a federal election was called on October 1, 1988. The Bill died on the order paper, and responsibility for Federal Child care initiatives now rests with the new government.

Provincial Initiatives

Although the federal government stalled for many months before announcing its initiatives, the Ontario government presented its strategy and endorsed a role for school boards in child care. While the major responsibility still rests with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education is now being recognized as a partner in a supporting role. The ever-increasing number of school boards involved in the child care system and pressure from the education system through lobbying efforts by associations such as ALSBO has helped to legitimize the role of boards.

At the end of April 1987, the Ontario government's Speech from the Throne recognized the specific role that schools play in school-aged child care. It lauded the "community school" concept in which the local school serves many purposes and often houses a child care centre. The government went on record and announced that it would require the provision of child care spaces in all NEW schools.

To support this, a joint project of the Ministries of Education and Community and Social Services is underway in which the education ministry is providing an additional $11 million for the construction of child care centres in new schools to open during the 1988-89 school year. Also announced was the provision of start-up and program funding for non-profit operators locating in new and existing school space, as well as money for the renovation of vacant space in school buildings. This funding will be available through the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The second Throne Speech (November 1987) reinforced the government's commitment to provide school-aged child care in schools, and school neighbourhoods. This is part of the government's new, integrated child care system.

Both these initiatives are positive in philosophy but have not yet been supported by solid policy directives or by implementation guidelines. This creates further confusion about the school board's role and has generated specific the concerns and questions.

In September of 1987, the Ministry of Community and Social Services released New Directions In Child Care, a report reflecting the government's "vision for the future of child care" in Ontario. It includes a stated commitment to a comprehensive, province-wide system which will provide "flexibility, choice and affordability" for families. It also outlines a central role for schools boards, specifically in the provision of school-age child care services. In encouraging boards to participate in this new strategy, New Directions promises funding of $33 million over three years for school-based centres - dollars for new school construction and for renovation of existing school space. Also included are funds for Pilot Projects which show flexibility in the provision of school-aged care and for the expansion of current programs licenced under the Day Nurseries Act which currently operate in school space.

The companion to New Directions is the document Child Care: Program Development Fund, released in March 1988. This document outlines the application procedure and guidelines for non-profit incorporated community groups seeking operational funding. A full range of care services -

group centres, resource centres, private home child care, public education initiatives, community development and pilot projects - are eligible. The ultimate goal is to increase the number of licensed non-profit delivery services provided by corporations with parent boards of directors.

Once again this is a major step toward improved child care service in Ontario, but the questions that exist about school boards' legal role and responsibilities remain unanswered.

Task Force Initiatives

During the summer of 1987, the ALSBO Survey on School-Based Child Care Services was prepared and sent to every school board in the province. While not a truly "scientific" survey instrument, it was designed to collect general information on the types of child care services currently operating in schools, school board policies on child care, and board concerns.

The response rate was an acceptable 34%, with 12% of the respondents noting that programs did not exist in their jurisdictions. The most useful information was obtained from the comments the responding boards included with their returned surveys.

The major issues centre on funding for school-based child care services. The lack of space to house programs and, not surprisingly, government policy - or absence thereof - were frequently named as an impediment to school boards' involvement. Dissatisfaction with the lack of implementation of the Ministry of Education's Early Primary Education Project which contained many child care related recommendations was also noted.

Also at issue is the use of education dollars raised from local ratepayers to support child care. Many boards are unwilling to allocate funds, provide space and other services to child care which is not the responsibility of the school system. This position is shared by local taxpayers in many areas of Ontario. The survey did show that the education system is becoming increasingly involved in child care on a number of levels and is interested in becoming more involved in the provision of services. It also pointed out the general lack of individual school board policy to deal with child care. The confusion with the current delivery system and the varied roles of the "partners" (the federal and provincial governments, Ontario ministries, child care operators, school boards, municipal governments, parents and the local community) continues and has, in fact, increased since the survey was conducted. This is the result of the many new government initiatives which have not been supported by clear direction and guidelines for these policies to be implemented at the local level.

With the survey underway, the Task Force organized a province-wide conference on The Role Of School Boards in Child Care in conjunction with the Ontario Council for Leadership in Educational Administration (OCLEA). The conference was held February 19 and 20, 1988 at the Westbury Hotel in Toronto. The two-day event was designed to:

1) introduce school trustees, school board administrative and teaching staff, and other interested groups to the current situation

2) encourage and help boards to become involved in the provision of services

3) identify problems in service delivery and propose potential solutions

4) ascertain perceptions of the future of school-based child care and the role of school boards, and

5) propose recommendations for a position for ALSBO.

More than 130 people from across Ontario and beyond attended, including staff from school boards, school trustees, the teachers' federations, the Ministries of Education and Community and Social Services, child care centres, community agencies, and Indian bands.

The program featured an introduction to the current situation as it relates to school boards, a number of "models of success" - programs currently in operation in the education system, and a panel discussion on the roles and interaction of the various partners involved in school-based child care (MOE, COMSOC, school boards, school staff). Also discussed were the many complex issues affecting boards, the legal climate (including school board liability), programming and quality, the political implications for school trustees in balancing community needs with perceptions and expectations, and the need for board policy and in-house staff coordination.

The final session, entitled "Where do we go from here?" collected delegate reactions to the conference and sought potential direction on the role of school boards in service delivery. Program highlights are included in Appendix .

The conference generated a number of proposals for action by the education community. These included:

1) the need for board-employed staff to support and administer school-based programs with funding provided by the government through either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Community and Social Services (or on a shared basis)

2) funding for pilot projects to develop new centres and delivery systems through local schools

3) the production of an "information kit" to provide school boards with information to deal with the organizational and legal aspects involved in the development of school-based services

4) future conferences and seminars dealing with school-based child care for board personnel, school trustees, parents and others

5) lobbying the provincial government and the ministries involved to provide - immediately - clear policy on the role of school boards and enrolment principles for school-based centres

6) continuation of the capital funding initiatives for the development of child care centres in new schools and funding for the renovation of existing school space

7) addressing the issue of the shortage of qualified early childhood education staff and the low salary scales in early childhood education

8) lobbying for legislative changes to permit school boards on a permissive, not a required basis to hold licenses for child care centres under the Day Nurseries Act, and

9) maintaining the philosophy that the needs of the child and the provision of appropriate child development programs are essential to the provision of child care.

The conference was successful on many levels: in providing useful and practical information to delegates, in raising awareness of the current situation and the issues involved, and in determining that the education community does support a role for itself in child care to meet the needs of the local community and students of all ages.

The Task Force also worked to lobby the government both through members of the legislature and staff of the two key ministries (Education, and Community and Social Services) to develop and implement policy in the area of school-based child care. These lobbying activities were centered around the very real perception that improved collaboration needs to exist between the two ministries.

School boards attempting to obtain clarification on the allocation of capital funds for new school construction, on how to gain access to renovation dollars for existing space, and on the responsibilities of school boards in the selection of non-profit, licensed operators for school-based centres received substantially different information from the two ministries involved.

Repeated requests for the release of two promised documents: a joint statement from the two Ministers involved and a question and answer brochure outlining the responsibilities of school boards, went unanswered. ALSBO approached the Deputy Minister of Education for clarification, and a meeting between school trustees and the appropriate ministry staff was held on February 3, 1988.

At this meeting, trustee representatives were assured that the ministries were working jointly to develop new policy, to revise existing policies dealing with child care, and to rationalize the role of school boards. It was also suggested that boards should continue to contact the Ministry offices (central and regional) with their questions and concerns. Once again, requests for release of the statement and brochure were not answered, leaving boards with no clear basis for planning, particularly for the selection of operators for centres already under construction in new schools which local communities expected would open in September, 1988.

Joint Ministry Initiatives in School-Aged Child Care

On April 19, 1988, the statement and the brochure were released. Child Care for School-Aged Children, the joint ministry statement, outlined a "new partnership" between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community and Social Services to support the delivery of services to school-aged children (3.8 to 12 years of age). The commitments of the two ministries, individually and jointly, were outlined in this statement.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services, through its Child Care Branch is responsible for:

1) developing policy and legislation
2) designing new program models
3) identifying funding requirements
4) evaluating child care programs
5) funding for renovation of vacant school space

6) funding for start-up, furniture, fixtures and equipment (for non-profit organizations)

7) assisting the development of community and parent boards of directors, and

8) ongoing support and advice.

Through its Centre for Early Childhood and Elementary Education, the Ministry of Education commitments include:

1) capital funding of $11.1 million in 1988-89 for design and construction of child care space in new elementary and secondary schools (expected to continue over several years, with additional funds being proposed).

The statement is clear that school boards are responsible only for coordinating the design and planning of this space and will not operate the programs. This will be the responsibility of non-profit community organizations operating licensed programs in new schools. Interestingly, operators of centres in "vacant" school space do not necessarily have to be non-profit corporations although this is recommended.

Also outlined are joint Ministry commitments including:

1) province-wide consultation with boards and the education community, child care providers and organizations, parents, and community groups

2) examining the role of schools, the sharing of facilities and resources and the nature of programs offered

3) developing guidelines and new legislation, reviewing existing legislation, and

4) implementing pilot projects.

Child Care in School - Questions & Answers

Released at the same time as the statement was an information package (brochure) entitled Child Care in Schools - Questions & Answers. This provided only basic information required by school boards. It clarified some of the concerns expressed by the education community but failed to resolve a number of specific issues. However, the document, like the joint statement, promised that a consultation process would be undertaken "with the broader community" around child care needs and issues.

Vol 2 of Q&A was issued in April, 1989, and discussed issues including policy enrolment and the roles of the Ministries involved.

Advisory Committee on Child Care Issues

On April 15, 1988, the Ministry of Education's Centre for Early Childhood and Elementary Education wrote to the Ontario School Trustees' Council notifying it of the establishment of an Advisory Committee designed to assist the Ministry in the development of a child care policy paper. The document, which was released in mid-December 1988, was intended to act "as a policy foundation for future Ministry of Education child care activities". School boards, child care centres located in schools, teacher groups and many others were asked to respond to the paper by the end of January, 1989.

Forty-one representatives from a variety of organizations involved in child care, including trustees, teachers, early childhood educators, multicultural and native groups, parents, the Ontario Women's Directorate, and others, are serving on this Advisory Committee. It is chaired by staff from the Ministry of Education's Centre for Early Childhood and Elementary Education. The first meeting was held in Toronto at the Ministry of Education's expense in May, 1988 and a second session will be held early 1989 after responses to the policy document have been received and reviewed by the Ministry of Education.